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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/973,802	10/11/2001	Shoichi Taneichi	0445-0309P	8999
2292	7590	07/29/2004	EXAMINER	
BIRCH STEWART KOLASCH & BIRCH			WATKINS III, WILLIAM P	
PO BOX 747			ART UNIT	
FALLS CHURCH, VA 22040-0747.			PAPER NUMBER	
			1772	

DATE MAILED: 07/29/2004

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

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DETAILED ACTION

1. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

2. Claims 1-3, 8-10 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Vander Wielen et al. (U.S. 4,720,415) in view of Schleinz et al. (U.S. 5,612,118).

Vander Wielen et al. teaches a gathered top layer joined to an elastic layer. The gathered layer may be a carded web (col. 12, lines 15-20). Elastic fibers are taught as forming the elastic layer of Vander Wielen et al. and can be in the form of nonwoven webs (col. 4, lines 60-65). Schleinz et al. teaches that a joined layer can be gathered by elastic fibers that are heat shrunk (col. 8, lines 1-10, col. 4, lines 35-40). The instant invention claims the use of elastic fibers, which heat shrink to form a gathered web. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to use heat shrink fibers to

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gather the web of Vander Wielen et al. because of the teaching of Schleinz et al. that heat shrinking can be used instead of elastic expansion before bonding in order to construct a gathered web laminate. Selection of specific fiber density and degree of elastic expansion is dependent on the final application and is taken as being within the ordinary skill of the art absent unexpected results.

3. Claims 5, 6, 7 and 11-27 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Vander Wielen et al. in view of Schleinz et al. as applied to claims 1-3 and 8-10 above, and further in view of Zelazoski et al. (U.S. 5,536,555).

Zelazoski et al. teaches putting holes in gathered webs in order to allow good fluid intake rates when the gathered composite is used as a layer in an absorbent personal care article (col. 2, lines 1-15, abstract). Zelazoski et al. also teaches the formation of a gathered top layer by thermal contraction of materials that may be elastic in a second layer and the use of latent thermal crimped fibers in the second layer (col. 6, lines 60-65, col. 7, lines 20-35, col.8, lines 50-65, col. 9, lines 5-15). The instant invention claims a gathered web with perforations used in an absorbent article with latent

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crimp fibers in the elastic layer. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to have perforated the web of Vander Wielen et al. in view of Schleinz et al. in order to have good fluid intake because of the teachings of Zelazoski et al. when used in an absorbent application. It further would have been obvious to use latent crimp fibers as part of the fibers of the elastic layer of Vander Wielen et al. in order to form a second layer well suited for use in an absorbent article because of the teachings of Zelazoski et al. (col. 6, lines 55-65). The instant claimed basis weight, density and permeability ranges are taken as being met by the combination as the absorbent article of the combination has the same uses as that taught by the instant specification and would therefore have similar ranges when optimized for this application absent unexpected results.

4. Applicant's argument's filed 08 April 2004 have been considered but are not considered to be persuasive.

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Applicant continues to argue that the elastic layer contraction of Vander Wielen is not by thermal action. The examiner continues to rely on Schleinz et al. for this limitation. Applicant's arguments regarding the lack of a fiber in the elastic layer of Schleinz have been answered previously. Regarding the latent crimping fiber limitation of claim 5, this limitation is newly addressed in the rejection above using Zelazoski et al. Regarding claims 8-10, Vander Wielen et al. teaches carded webs as noted in the above rejection.

5. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to William P. Watkins III whose telephone number is 571-272-1503. The examiner works an increased flex time schedule, but can normally be reached Monday through Friday, 11:30 A.M. through 8:00 P.M. Eastern Time. The examiner returns all calls within one business day unless an extended absence is noted on his voice mail greeting.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Harold Pyon can be reached on 571-272-1498. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 703-872-9306.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

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WW/ww

July 23, 2004

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "William P. Watkins III". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent loop at the end.

WILLIAM P. WATKINS III
PRIMARY EXAMINER